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CONSTITUTION
OF THE
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CHRIST,
GUELPH, CANADA WEST.

Organized, June, 1835.

“The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” Psa. lxxxvii. 6.

“His mercy visits every house
That pay their night and morning vows ;
But makes a more delightful stay
Where Churches meet to praise and pray.”

PRINTED BY G. M. KEELING, GUELPH.

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CONSTITUTION, &c.

I. ARTICLES OF FAITH.

1. We believe in the Divine authenticity of the different Revelations made at sundry times to the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles: and which are now embodied in the books of the Old and New Testaments.

2. We believe in one only living and true God, and cordially assent to the representation of his character in the Bible as eternal in his existence, spiritual in his nature, invincible in his power, unerring in his wisdom, sovereign in his will, inviolable in his faithfulness, inexorable in his justice, immaculate in his holiness, and illimitable in his love.

3. We believe that in this mysterious Jehovah, there exist three distinct persons, possessing the same perfections, performing the same operations, and having a claim to the same adoration, worship, and obedience.

4. We believe that the Divine Trinity, from eternity, formed one simple, unalterable, sovereign, all-wise, equitable purpose, which embraces all the movements of the universe,—and whatever appears to us contingent and accidental, is under its influence.

5. We believe that the Creator made man upright, possessing the moral image of God, and enjoying the friendly smiles of his Maker,—and, that while man was in that state, God entered into covenant with him, as the federal head of his posterity, and connected with that covenant remunerative and penal sanctions. From this happy state man fell by transgression, and his descendants are fallen in him. The whole human race are naturally the subjects of entire depravity—the Divine image is lost—the Divine vengeance provoked—and the tremendous penalties attached to the covenant broken, are incurred.

6. We believe, and rejoice, in the stupendous display of love and compassion in the economy of Redemption as revealed in the Scriptures of truth. In this economy God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are equally engaged.—The Father declares his willingness to extend his mercy to our fallen race. The Son engages to become the surety of his people, and to satisfy every demand of injured justice—to magnify the Divine Law, and to make it honorable. The Holy Ghost freely engages to reveal the plan of Redemption, and apply its blessings to the souls of sinners. In consequence of this all-gracious covenant, in the fulness of time God the Son appeared in our world by taking our nature into mysterious union with his own, that by thus connecting the humanity with the Divinity in one complete person, he might officiate as our Mediator, and be qualified to sustain the three-fold character of Prophet, Priest, and King. In this capacity, the Lord Jesus Christ by his spotless nature, perfect obedience, and substitutive sufferings, fulfilled all his covenant engagements, and accomplished an infinite righteousness for the justification of his people,—and it is by the imputation of his righteousness alone, totally independent of any excellence or merit in the creature, that a sinner can be acceptable to God, or receive an acquittal at his tribunal. Faith in Christ is the instrument by which this righteousness is embraced. This principle of Faith will be productive of holiness in life and conversation.

7. We believe the operations of the Holy Ghost to be essential to quicken from death in sin to a life in righteousness—in implanting those graces which it is his prerogative to bestow—and in sanctifying us body, soul and spirit, that thus we may be rendered “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.”

8. We believe that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both small and great, and a general judgment both of the righteous and the wicked—that the latter shall be punished with everlasting destruction, and the former shall enter into life eternal.

9. We believe that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are

divine ordinances in the Church, of perpetual obligation.— Baptism is the application of water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and is to be administered only to believers and their households.— The Lord's Supper is the social and solemn partaking of the bread and the cup in remembrance of the dying love of Jesus Christ, and should be celebrated by all who believe in Him.

10. We believe in the Christian Sabbath,—and that it is our duty and interest to attend the public worship of God on that day, and at convenient seasons on other days, according to the law of God, and the example of the primitive Christians.

11. We believe each congregation of professed disciples of Christ meeting in one place, and united by mutual covenant, is a complete Church, having no superior but the Lord Jesus Christ, and subject to no authority but his,— and as such it derives from him the right to choose and to remove its own officers, and to administer the ordinances and discipline appointed by the word of God. The officers of the Church are Bishops and Deacons. The former to take the spiritual oversight thereof, and the latter to take care of the temporal affairs, and to discharge such other offices as the exigencies of the Church may require.

II. CHURCH COVENANT.

Applying the foregoing doctrines to our own souls, we, trusting in Divine grace for strength, covenant and promise to forsake sin, and to walk in His ordinances blameless.— We also give ourselves to each other according to His word,—and solemnly engage as members of His body, and of this particular branch of His visible Church upon earth, to fulfil, as far as in us lies, the sacred duties incumbent upon us, as enjoined in the Holy Scriptures. And we pray the God of all grace to give us strength from above to enable us to practise and carry out, to His glory and our mu-

tual benefit, this solemn covenant, that we may be found blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be admitted into the eternal fellowship of His saints with unspeakable joy.

III. RULES FOR CHURCH ORDER AND GOVERNMENT.

1. For the preservation of truth and order, and the prosperity of the Church, members shall be admitted either on a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, or by letters missive from other Churches. In the reception of members, the Church should be unanimous. If any member object to the reception of a candidate, such objector shall be required to state the nature of the objection, that the Church may judge whether it be sufficient to prevent the reception of said candidate. JOHN vi. 47. 1 COR. xvi. 3. ACTS ix. 26—28.

2. As it is the duty and privilege of believers to watch over each other for good, to bear each other's burdens, to love and pray for each other, and for the peace and prosperity of Zion, the Church will assemble at such stated times as shall be agreed upon, for prayer and for conference, in conformity with the custom of the primitive Churches—a custom which has generally prevailed among Congregational Churches from age to age. ACTS ii. 42. HEB. x. 25. MAL. iii. 16, 17.

3. Every member shall feel it to be a duty and a privilege to contribute towards the support of the cause of Christ, especially in connexion with this branch of the Church universal, for the purpose of meeting the expenses necessary in sustaining the worship and ordinances of God amongst us,—and it is highly desirable, as far as possible, that such contributions be made weekly, or at least once every quarter. PROV. xi. 25. 2 COR. ix. 6, 7. 1 COR. xvi. 2.

4. For the purity of the Church and the honor of Christ, the members shall watch over each other in love, and if any

brother or sister fall into immorality of conduct, false and erroneous doctrine, stir up strife, and engender divisions, or in any way depart from the rule of the word of God, so as to bring scandal upon his cause, such persons shall be subject to the discipline of the church, and, if proved guilty, shall be SUSPENDED OR EXCLUDED, as the case may in the judgment of the Church require. EPH. v. 11. TITUS iii. 10. ROM. xvi. 17.

5. As the object of Church censures is not punishment but reformation and recovery, every possible effort should be made to produce conviction, and penitence,—and wherever expedient, *suspension* for a time rather than expulsion, shall be adopted. GAL. vi. 1. MATT. vii. 2.—JOHN viii. 11.

6. In reference to offences between members, in all cases, the rule laid down by the Saviour shall be followed.—“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church. But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.”—MATT. xviii. 15—17.

7. There shall be a standing Committee, comprising the Pastor, Deacons, and competent members sufficient to make the number of said Committee, seven. The members not in office to be elected annually at the July Church Meeting. The duties of said Committee shall be to manage all financial affairs, examine questions of difficulty between members of the Church, and to report to the Church in all cases for a final decision. The Pastor is not to be considered bound to preside on financial affairs. But he shall in every case appoint a chairman before vacating it. Provided that the Pastor be not obliged to attend financial meetings.
1 COR. xiv. 40. PROV. xi. 14.

8. It shall be the duty of members of this Church living at a distance, to report themselves at least once in a year

to this body, and that any member absent for one year, not complying with this regulation, shall be liable to have his or her name erased from the Church Records, at the discretion of the Church.

9. Every member, wishing to make a motion, shall be requested to write down the same, with the name of the seconder attached, and hand such motion to the chairman.

Members absent in themselves two consecutive months from the ordinances of the Church shall be visited and unless satisfactory reasons be assigned for such absence each absentee shall be liable to have his or her name erased from the Church Records at the discretion of the Church. This Rule also applies to members at a distance from the locality of the Church who shall be required to report themselves once in every two months by personal presence or written communication.

1 Cor. VIII. 25; Ephes. II. 19

Every Member shall feel under a sacred obligation to keep the secrets of the Church inviolable not divulging its private affairs to those who are not in communion with it, on the principle that ~~the~~ ^{as} the Church is a ~~place~~ ^{an} enclosure from the world. Mat. VIII. 6. 2 Cor. VI. 14.

Members of this Church shall feel bound to pray for the Pastor, and for the success of his ministry in word and doctrine; also to sustain him under the trials and difficulties connected with his sacred calling; to follow him so far as he follows Christ; to uphold him in his labours of love; and to consider it our duty to render to him to him which the word of the Lord enjoineth.

1 Thes. V. 12. 15. 2 Thes. III.

The Members of this church shall consider their sacred duty to sympathize with each other in joy, sorrow, and temptation; especially when any brother or sister is labouring under distress, of mind body, or circumstances arising from trying dispensation of Providence, affliction or persecution. This illustrates the design of our covenant relation. Pro. XII. 12. Eph.

As much as possible the members of this Church shall fulfil their duty to be peaceable with all men; all uncharitable reflections upon the weakness and infirmities of our fellow creatures, whether within the bounds of a ship or not, also to win all to a supposing pity & tenderness, all labouring to conceal, rather than expose the weaknesses of our brethren where there is no transgression. See Wm. 35. Col. VI. 16.

ll persons on being admitted to full communion
to the Church shall be required to sign the Articles,
and Covenant, thus pronouncing a pledge that they
will, willingly, to submit to our discipline.

I S A X T U . 5. J u n e . 4 5 .

The above Rules shall be read at a Church
Meeting once in every three months.

IV. Order of Business

All important resolutions shall if the
imman demand necessary be proposed in writing
and Candidates for communion shall be proposed
month previous to admission.

At Church meetings business shall proceed
in the following order:

- 1 Devotional exercises comprising singing &
prayer -
- 2 Candidates examined, or reported upon
and the vote for admission taken.
- 3 Reports of Special Committee
4. Reports of Standing Committee
- 5 Unfinished business -
- 6 New business -
- 7 Devotional exercises -

4. The members shall fulfil it thir duty holding
meetings appointed by the Church both on Lord's
days and other days, nothing hindering, except distan-
tance, or the works of necessity ^{or} America -

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